



U.S. Department of Justice

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**FORMER BOOKKEEPER SENTENCED TO 24 MONTHS IN PRISON
FOR DEFRAUDING CHAIN HOTEL IN ROCKFORD OUT OF AT LEAST \$350,000**

ROCKFORD – PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and THOMAS J. KNEIR, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, today made the following announcement:

United States District Judge Philip G. Reinhard today sentenced **JANICE M. BIRKENESS**, 44 (DOB: 12/29/59), 1670 Glen Elms Drive, Belvidere, Illinois, formerly employed as the bookkeeper at a Rockford chain hotel, to 24 months in federal prison for mail fraud arising from her theft of at least \$350,000 in cash receipts from the hotel from January 1998 through December 2002. In addition to her prison term, the court ordered Birkeness to serve three years of supervised release following her release from prison, and ordered her to pay restitution of \$330,464.

At the time of her guilty plea on June 4, 2004, Birkeness acknowledged that she was employed as the bookkeeper of a chain hotel in Rockford, Illinois ("the Hotel"). As the bookkeeper, Birkeness was responsible for making daily bank deposits of the cash and checks received by the Hotel and for recording these deposits on a "Daily Sales and Cash Report."

Birkeness admitted that from January 1998 through December 2002, she stole cash from the Hotel's cash receipts and used that cash for personal purchases for herself and her family. Birkeness admitted that she concealed her theft by falsely recording on the "Daily Sales and Cash Report" that the Hotel had received less cash than it actually had received. Birkeness admitted that she would deliver the Report to the Hotel's outside accountant on a monthly basis, knowing that the Report contained false information. Birkeness further admitted that she knew the outside accountant would use the false information to prepare a monthly operating statement that would falsely underreport the Hotel's actual income by the total amount of her thefts of cash for that month.

The case was investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case was prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney Keith C. Syfert.

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